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CATTLE WARTS

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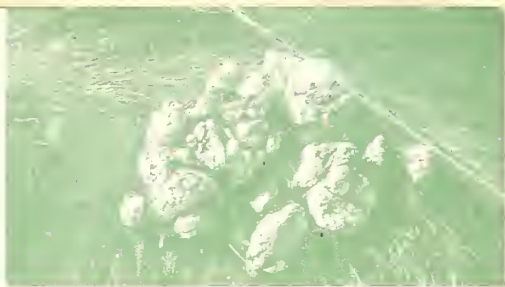
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



LEAFLET NO. 441

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



CATTLE WARTS

Common warts¹ on cattle are caused by a virus. They spread from infected to wart-free cattle, but not to man or other animals.

Wart virus enters an animal's body through injuries or breaks in the skin. Infection is spread when wart-free cattle that have skin injuries touch warty animals or objects that warty animals have touched. Warts also may spread in other ways.

Calves and yearlings get warts more easily than older cattle.

Damage

Many small warts or a few large ones may weaken young cattle and slow their growth.

Warts damage hides permanently. Tanned hides have rough, weak spots where warts occurred. Seriously affected hides often contain pits or holes; they look moth eaten.

Description

On young cattle, warts usually appear on the head, neck, and shoulders. They may spread over large areas of the body. On cows, warts frequently occur on the udder or teats.

Warts may occur singly or in clusters. They may be hard or soft elevated masses. Many warts are small and rounded; others are broad, thin, long, or club shaped.

Some warts become cauliflower-like growths, occasionally as large as 8 to 10 inches across. Usually, these growths are soft and give off an offensive odor.

Most warts receive a plentiful blood supply; they bleed readily. Injured warts often become open wounds that easily are infested with parasites or infected.

Warts may slough off at any time. Sometimes new warts form at the site of the earlier wart.



Left: Closeup of large, cauliflower-like wart. (N-22822)
Heifer severely infected with cattle warts. (70775-8)

Treatment

Warts usually disappear naturally without treatment as animals mature. Most 2-year-old cattle are wart-free.

If you want to treat animals, you can tie off warts, apply medications, or ask your veterinarian to vaccinate.

Treatment reduces skin injury that would damage the hide, but it does not restore skin to top condition.

Animals may require treatment if—

- Warts sap strength.
- Warts spread rapidly.
- Stumps become infected.

If any of these conditions occur, call your veterinarian. He will suggest a treatment for your herd and recommend sanitary measures.

Vaccination

Vaccination may prevent and control warts.

Your veterinarian may vaccinate the seriously affected animals to remove warts and the healthy animals to prevent warts.

Usually, veterinarians use commercial vaccines. Chicken-embryo-origin vaccine is prepared from cattle-wart virus grown in fertile eggs; bovine-origin vaccine is prepared from virus taken from warty cattle.

For treating valuable herds that do not respond to other treatment, your veterinarian may recommend autogenous vaccine, which is made from warty tissue that he takes from an affected animal. Because it is prepared for an individual animal or herd, autogenous vaccine should be used only in the herd from which it was collected. It usually is more expensive than other vaccines.

¹ Infectious papilloma.

Tying

Remove warts that have small bases by tying sterile cotton thread tightly around the base of each wart. (Using a sterile thread will prevent introducing a new infection. Sterilize your thread by boiling it in water for 10 minutes.) When the blood supply is cut off, a wart usually dies and sloughs off in a few days. If the thread becomes loose or is removed before the wart sloughs off, tightly tie another sterile thread around the base of the wart.

Paint the stumps of warts with caustic potash stick, glacial acetic acid, tincture of iodine, or silver nitrate solution.

Tying will not remove warts with large bases.

Acid, Iodine, or Oil

Daily applications of glacial acetic acid or tincture of iodine may destroy small warts. Dip a cotton swab into acid or iodine and paint the affected area. Before applying acid, protect healthy skin around warts with vaseline or lard. Do not grease the warts.

Apply sweet or castor oil daily to small warts on the udder. If these are kept soft, they may slough off.

Prevention

Isolate severely infected animals.

Thoroughly clean barns, pens, chutes, and rubbing posts that warty cattle have touched. Remove manure and burn contaminated bedding and rubbish. Sweep surfaces free of cobwebs and dust. Wash the area with hot water and lye.

Disinfect the cleaned area by spraying it with a lye-and-water solution. Prepare this by adding a 13-ounce can of lye to 5 gallons of hot water.

CAUTION: Lye is a caustic poison: use it carefully.

Milk the cows that have warts on their teats and udders after you milk the rest of the herd. Clean and disinfect milking machine teat cups and inflations before reusing.

Warty cows may be milked by hand during the treatment period. If milkers wash their hands thoroughly with strong soap after milking each warty cow, they will not spread the infection to wart-free cows.

